Introduction

"Quagmire." "Stalemate." "Insurgency." "Stay the course." "Win or get out." Words and phrases like these—which are beginning to dominate our nation's airwaves, op-ed pages and political speeches—have not been in common political circulation for thirty years: since the Vietnam war. Administration officials and media pundits dismiss parallels between Iraq and Vietnam. But such dismissals are ringing increasingly hollow on the ears of ordinaryAmericans, who are watching their sons and daughters, wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters come home in bodybags, dying in a bogged-down war in a distant land, for no clear national purpose.

Of course there are important differences between the two wars: in the motivations for entering the war, in the ideology of our enemy, in the support the enemy enjoys from outside nations. All historical events are unique, and there will always be differences. But history also occur in patterns. According to Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, the patterns emerging in Iraq, both on the front lines and at home, are disturbingly familiar. This book is the first in-depth, blow-by-blow comparison of the Iraq and Vietnam. It shows that what unites the two wars is, sadly, much greater than what divides them.

Ellsberg sees ten significant parallels between the Iraq war and the Vietnam war. Within each of these broad areas of historical overlap there are dozens of sub-parallels, often leading to uncanny moments of déjà vu. The ten broad parallels are: the nature of the guerrilla insurgency; the sham of "democracy;" presidential lies and government secrecy; congressional weakness; media complicity; unwillingness to learn from past experience; secret nuclear dimensions to the conflicts; the power of mass mobilization; the need for more whistleblowers; and the case for

withdrawal. He also sees a few disturbing *non*-parallels: the oil in Iraq; the war is making us much less safe at home; and the war may spark events which essentially end our democracy, unless we

act soon.

In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg warned the nation publicly that the Vietnam war was not winding down, that the bombing was only going to get worse, and that we were in for escalation, not withdrawal. His predictions were seen as lunacy at the time. But each one of them came to pass, in the precise manner in which he predicted. In the run-up to the Iraq-war, Ellsberg was one of the only national figures warning his countrymen publicity that we would soon find ourselves bogged down in a war that looked very much like Vietnam. His predictions appear to be coming true once more: unless we change course, fast.

Ultimately, the book has a positive message: we can change. With each of then ten parallels comes an associated lesson, an opportunity to wake up and steer away from the shoals into which we are perilously close to crashing. Never before have Santayana's words been more urgent: "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." *Iraq/Vietam* is the first book to show just how to begin this painful learning, before it is too late.

About the Author

Daniel Ellsberg was born in Detroit in 1931. After graduating from Harvard in 1952 with a B.A. Summa cum Laude in Economics, he studied for a year at King's College, Cambridge University, on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

Between 1954 and 1957, he spent three years in the U.S. Marine Corps, serving as rifle platoon leader, operations officer, and rifle company commander.

From 1957-59 he was a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows, Harvard University. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics at Harvard in 1962 with his thesis, *Risk, Ambiguity and Decision*, (published by Garland Press in 2001).

In 1959, he became a strategic analyst at the RAND Corporation, and consultant to the Department of Defense and the White House, specializing in problems of the command and control of nuclear weapons, nuclear war plans, and crisis decision-making.

He joined the Defense Department in 1964 as Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) John McNaughton, working on Vietnam. He transferred to the State Department in 1965 to serve two years at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, evaluating pacification on the front lines.

On return to the RAND Corporation in 1967, he worked on the Top Secret McNamara study of U.S. Decision-making in Vietnam, 1945-68, which later came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. In 1969, he photocopied the 7,000 page study and gave it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; in 1971 he gave it to the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and 17 other newspapers. His trial, on twelve felony counts posing a possible sentence of 115 years, was dismissed in 1973 on grounds of governmental misconduct against him, which led to the convictions of several White House aides and figured in the impeachment proceedings against President Nixon.

Since the end of the Vietnam War he has been a lecturer, writer and activist on the dangers of the nuclear era and unlawful interventions. In 2003, his national bestseller *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* (Viking, 2002) won the American Book Award, the PEN Center Award for Creative Nonfiction, the Bay Area Book Reviewers Association Prize for Non-Fiction, and was a Finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Nonfiction.

A Note from the Author Probably not included

My own interests currently lie in writing detailed, scholarly, analytical articles about the lessons of Vietnam, several of which I am currently working on. However, my son Michael, a developmental editor who worked on three drafts of my book *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, collected, edited, and transcribed my various writings, interviews, and lectures on the topic, and convinced me of the value of putting out an edited volume of these materials sooner rather than later, given their current urgency and relevance. I agreed, and granted him permission to pull these disparate materials together into the book you are now reading. The words are mine; the structure and organizational scheme are Michael's, along with his streamlining, tightening, and rearranging. By its nature, a volume like this is not as unitary, as detailed, or as analytical as would be a book I wrote from start to finish (a project which could a year or more—while the war rages on). But it does have one major advantage over such a book: it is out now, available to be discussed, raising what I feel are crucial matters for the future of our democracy.

Outline of the Book

Introduction

Chapter 1: Parallel 1—Fighting a Guerrilla Enemy

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Chapter 1: Parallel and Lesson1—Fighting a Guerrilla Enemy

The Enemy's control of the population beyond the Green Zone

Disinterest of officials in learning first-hand the reality of the field

Indifference to the suffering we impose on civilians

Revolutionary Judo

Chapter 2: Parallel and Lesson 2—The Sham of "Democracy

Intolerance for candidates/parties calling for U.S. withdrawal

Tolerance of corruption

Torture

Chapter Three: Parallel and Lesson 3—Presidential Lies and Government Secrecy

"Unequivocal evidence" of a threat

"We seek no wider war"

"This war serves an important national purpose"

"A war of necessity, not of choice."

"The enemy will be defeated easily"

"We are making progress"

"We do not intend to stay indefinitely"

"We are sending all the troops the Pentagon is requesting"

Dirty War

Chapter Four: Parallel and Lesson 4—Congressional Weakness

Delegating and abrogating their constitutional duty to decide on war and peace

Placing undue trust in the president's word

Tacit acceptance of the president lying to them

Failure to investigate (one's own facts)

Parallel and Lesson 5—Media Complicity

Reporting presidential statements as news, without critical inquiry

Fear of the "L" Word

lie

Failing to Report on Civilian Casualties

Ignoring, dismissing, and belittling dissenting voices

Blacking out key stories

Disinterest in other outlets' stories

Lack of follow-up

Chapter Six: Parallel and Lesson 6—Unwillingness to Learn From Past Experience

"The U.S. can't lose against rag-tag guerillas"

Failure to see ourselves as occupiers

Our soldiers have nothing to Tell us.

Chapter Seven: Parallel and Lesson 7—The Secret Nuclear Dimensions of the Conflict

Nuclear threats

Resistance to

Chapter Eight: Parallel and Lesson 8—The ~~Logic of~~ Withdrawal

We must honor our dead.

~~Throwing live bodies after dead bodies~~

Fear of being perceived as weak

Credibility

7 8

Lack of a candidate calling for withdrawal

Chapter Nine: Interlude—Disturbing *Non*-Parallels

Oil

This war is making us much less safe at home

This war may spark events which essentially end our democracy, unless we act soon.

Chapter Ten: Parallel and Lesson 9—The Need for More Whistleblowing

The number of people who could end the war by opening their safes

Loyalty to president over loyalty to congress,

Why don't they take some documents with them when they resign?

"If I leave, the person who will replace me will be worse"

Whistleblowing has a powerful effect

Chapter Eleven: Parallel and Lesson 10—The Power of Activism the End the War

This is a parallel in potentiality rather than in actuality, a nice note on which to end: we need to *make* it a parallel, fast, by drawing the appropriate lessons from our success as a movement in helping to end the Vietnam war.

Conclusion

Appendix

An annotated list of resources for education and action.